CLAIMS

1   1.   A method for managing interruptions to a network user, the interruptions being generated

2   by a plurality of senders on a network, the network user having a permanent reception list the

3   method comprising:

4   modifying a temporary reception list in response to one of a retrospective activity and a

5   prospective activity;

6   receiving an interruption from one of the senders on the network;

7   presenting the interruption to the network user if one of the permanent reception list and

8   the temporary reception list includes an entry associated with the one of the senders on the

9   network.

1   2.   The method of claim 1 wherein modifying the temporary reception list comprises adding

2   an entry to the temporary reception list upon a determination the time until the occurrence of the

3   prospective activity is less than a predetermined time.

1   3.   The method of claim 1 wherein modifying the temporary reception list comprises

2   removing an entry from the temporary reception list upon a determination that the age of the

3   retrospective activity exceeds a predetermined time.

1   4.   The method of claim 1 wherein the retrospective and prospective activities comprise

2   calendar-based entries established by the user.

1   5.   The method of claim 1 wherein the step of presenting the interruption further comprises:

2   receiving an urgency value associated with the interruption;

3   comparing the urgency value with an interruption threshold value defined by the network

4   user; and

5   presenting the interruption to the network user if the urgency value exceeds the threshold

6   value.

1   6.   The method of claim 1 further comprising:

2   receiving a user status request from one of the senders;

3   generating a generic status message if the permanent reception list and the temporary

4   reception list do not include an entry associated with the sender of the user status request; and

5   generating a customized status message if one of the permanent reception list and the

6   temporary reception list includes an entry associated with the sender of the user status request.

1   7.   The method of claim 1 wherein presenting the interruption comprises presenting an alert

2   to the network user if one of the permanent reception list and the temporary reception list

3   includes an entry associated with the one of the senders.

1   8.   The method of claim 7, wherein the alert comprises a signal that an interruption has been

2   requested, and at least one portion of an initial message from one of the senders and an

3   identification of the at least one of the senders is stored in a table for inspection by the user.

1   9.   The method of claim 7, wherein the alert comprises at least one of a portion of an initial

2   message from the one of the senders and an identification of the one of the senders.

1   10.   The method of claim 7 further comprising providing expanded information for the one of

2   the senders to the network user in response to a user request.

1   11.   A computer program product for use with a computer system, the computer program

2   product comprising a computer useable medium having embodied therein program code

3   comprising:

4   program code for modifying a temporary reception list of a network user in response to

5   one of a retrospective activity and a prospective activity;

6   program code for receiving an interruption from a sender on the network; and

7   program code for presenting the interruption to the network user if one of the temporary

8   reception list and a permanent reception list of the network user includes an entry associated with

9   the sender.

1   12.   The computer program product of claim 11 wherein the program code for modifying a

2   temporary reception list further comprises program code for adding an entry to the temporary

3   reception list upon a determination the time until the occurrence of the prospective activity is less

4   than a predetermined time.

1   13.   The computer program product of claim 11 wherein the program code for modifying a

2   temporary reception list further comprises program code for adding an entry to the temporary

3   reception list upon a determination that the time since the occurrence of the retrospective

4   activity is less than a predetermined time.

1   14.   The computer program product of claim 11 wherein the program code for modifying a

2   temporary reception list further comprises program code for removing an entry from the

3   temporary reception list upon a determination that the age of the retrospective activity exceeds a

4   predetermined time.

1   15.   The computer program product of claim 11 wherein the program code for presenting the

2   interruption further comprises:

3   program code for receiving an urgency value associated with the interruption;

4   program code for comparing the urgency value with an interruption threshold value

5   defined by the network user; and

6   program code for presenting the interruption to the network user if the urgency value

7   exceeds the threshold value.

1   16.   The computer program product of claim 11 further comprising:

2   program code for receiving a user status request from a status requestor;

3   program code for generating a generic status message if the temporary reception list and

4   the permanent reception list do not include an entry associated with the status requestor; and

5   program code for generating a customized status message if one of the temporary

6   reception list and the permanent reception list includes an entry associated with the status

7   requestor.

1   17.   The computer program product of claim 11 wherein the program code for presenting the

2   interruption comprises program code for presenting an alert to the network user if one of the

3   temporary reception list and the permanent reception list includes an entry associated with the

4   sender, the alert comprising at least one of a portion of an initial message from the sender and an

5   identification of the sender.

1   18.   The computer program product of claim 17 further comprising program code for

2   providing expanded information about the sender to the network user in response to a user

3   request.

1   19.   A computer data signal embodied in a carrier wave for use with a computer system

2   having a display and capable of generating a user interface through which a user may interact

3   with the computer system, the computer data signal comprising:

4   program code for modifying a temporary reception list of a network user in response to

5   one of a retrospective activity and a prospective activity;

6   program code for receiving an interruption from a sender on the network; and

7   program code for presenting the interruption to the network user if one of the temporary

8   reception list and a permanent reception list of the network user includes an entry associated with

9   the sender.

1   20.   The computer data signal of claim 19 wherein the program code for modifying a

2   temporary reception list further comprises program code for adding an entry to the temporary

3   reception list upon a determination the time until the occurrence of the prospective activity is less

4   than a predetermined time.

1   21.   The computer data signal of claim 19 wherein the program code for modifying a

2   temporary reception list further comprises program code for removing an entry from the

3   temporary reception list upon a determination that the age of the retrospective activity exceeds a

4   predetermined time.

1   22.   The computer data signal of claim 19 wherein the program code for presenting the

2   interruption further comprises:

3   program code for receiving an urgency value associated with the interruption;

4   program code for comparing the urgency value with an interruption threshold value

5   defined by the network user; and

6   program code for presenting the interruption to the network user if the urgency value

7   exceeds the threshold value.

1   23.   The computer data signal of claim 19 further comprising:

2   program code for receiving a user status request from a status requestor;

3   program code for generating a generic status message if the temporary reception list and

4   the permanent reception list do not include an entry associated with the status requestor; and

5   program code for generating a customized status message if one of the temporary

6   reception list and the permanent reception list includes an entry associated with the status

7   requestor.

1   24.   The computer data signal of claim 19 wherein the program code for presenting the

2   interruption comprises program code for presenting an alert to the network user if one of the

3   temporary reception list and the permanent reception list includes an entry associated with the

4   sender, the alert comprising at least one of a portion of an initial message from the sender and an

5   identification of the sender.

1   25.   The computer data signal of claim 24 further comprising program code for providing

2   expanded information about the sender to the network user in response to a user request.

1   26.   A computing system comprising:

2   a display screen;

3   a user input device; and

4   a processor executing a network user communications program to manage interruptions

5   to a network user, the interruptions being generated by a plurality of senders on a network,

6   wherein each interruption is presented to the network user on the display screen if one of a

7   permanent reception list and a temporary reception list includes an entry associated with the

8   respective sender.

1   27.   An apparatus for managing interruptions to a network user, the interruptions being

2   generated by a plurality of senders on a network, the network user having a permanent reception

3   list, the apparatus comprising:

4   means for modifying a temporary reception list in response to one of a retrospective

5   activity and a prospective activity;

6   means for receiving an interruption from one of the senders on the network;

7   means for presenting the interruption to the network user if one of the permanent

8   reception list and the temporary reception list includes an entry associated with the one of the

9   senders on the network. .

1   28.   The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the means for modifying the temporary reception list

2   comprises means for adding an entry to the temporary reception list upon a determination the

3   time until the occurrence of the prospective activity is less than a predetermined time.

1   29.   The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the means for modifying the temporary reception list

2   comprises means for removing an entry from the temporary reception list upon a determination

3   that the age of the retrospective activity exceeds a predetermined time.

1   30.   The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the means for presenting the interruption further

2   comprises:

3   means for receiving an urgency value associated with the interruption;

4   means for comparing the urgency value with an interruption threshold value defined by

5   the network user; and

6   means for presenting the interruption to the network user if the urgency value exceeds the

7   interruption threshold value.

1   31.   The apparatus of claim 27 further comprising:

2   means for receiving a user status request from one of the senders;

3   means for generating a generic status message if the permanent reception list and the

4   temporary reception list do not include an entry associated with the sender of the user status

5   request; and

6   means for generating a customized status message if one of the permanent reception list

7   and the temporary reception list includes an entry associated with the sender of the user status

8   request.

1   32.   The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the means for presenting the interruption comprises

2   presenting an alert to the network user if one of the permanent reception list and the temporary

3   reception list includes an entry associated with the one of the senders, the alert comprising at

4   least one of a portion of an initial message from the one of the senders and an identification of

5   the one of the senders.

1   33.   The apparatus of claim 32 further comprising means for providing expanded information

2   for the one of the senders to the network user in response to a user request.